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Letter dated 21 August 2013 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you a letter from the representative of the National Coalition of the Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces dated 21 August 2013 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Antonio **Bernardini**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 21 August 2013 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On behalf of the National Coalition of the Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces and the Supreme Military Council, I would like to draw your urgent attention to the latest attacks committed by Syrian regime forces against civilians in areas surrounding Damascus. There are strong indications and reliable reports that chemical weapons were used in these attacks, which may have killed in excess of 1,100 people

Early this morning, the Syrian regime unleashed a series of bombardments of opposition-held suburbs of Damascus. This included the launching of rockets with toxic agents against the civilian neighbourhoods concentrated in eastern Ghouta, specifically Joubar, Zamalka, Ain Terma and Moadamiya. Initial medical reports have indicated that casualties, many of them women and children, have displayed symptoms associated with the use of chemical weapons, including asphyxiation, salivating and blurred vision.

On the basis of these reports, the Syrian Coalition requests that the United Nations urgently dispatch its fact-finding mission, which is already in Damascus, mere kilometers away from the sites of the attacks, to travel to these sites immediately to conduct a full investigation. To protect the credibility of United Nations engagement in Syria, the United Nations fact-finding mission must respond rapidly to these latest attacks. The use of chemical weapons in suppressing a popular democratic uprising is a war crime and a crime against humanity, and must be treated with the utmost level of seriousness and urgency.

The Syrian Coalition and Supreme Military Council reiterate their willingness to cooperate fully with the mission and are prepared to offer any assistance that can facilitate the mission's activities in areas under their control. The regime must also give the United Nations team unfettered access to all areas and individuals that can assist it in its work to ensure that those responsible for this latest heinous attack are held accountable.

The Syrian Coalition reiterates its complete rejection of the use of chemical weapons. It remains committed to full accountability for anyone found responsible for chemical weapons use, in accordance with international law.

(*Signed*) Najib **Ghadbian**
Special Representative of the Syrian Coalition to the United Nations